The Young Entrepreneurs Study (YES) is a joint project with the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (IARYD) at Tufts University and the Stanford Center on Adolescence. Made possible through the support of the John Templeton Foundation, the YES project is a longitudinal study of the development of entrepreneurial purpose, achievements, and character attributes among diverse adolescents and young adults in the United States. Specifically, we are interested in identifying the cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and ecological bases of entrepreneurship development.

We define entrepreneurship as "The process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the risks, and receiving the resulting rewards." Among young people, entrepreneurship refers to the application of enterprising qualities within both new and existing organizations, and using the appropriate skills necessary for success in that environment and culture. Accordingly, we are interested in both traditional perceptions of entrepreneurship, such as starting a business, and the more novel pathways that young adults take to build a career. Entrepreneurship affords promising opportunities to people in low-income communities and has the potential to contribute in positive ways to economic well-being and positive social change in society. Therefore, we believe that fostering entrepreneurship will significantly enhance our business and social communities.

The quantitative and qualitative findings from this study will provide scientifically validated information needed for creating effective educational programs and policies designed to foster entrepreneurial capacity. In addition, this project will provide a theory of youth entrepreneurship, as well as a model for future entrepreneurship research on this essential but under-studied area of American life.

This report profiles our Wave 2 participants and highlights our publication and presentation activity through December 31, 2013.
Wave 2 Profile

Total participants: 3,484
Demographic areas: East Coast (n = 1251), West Coast (n = 1131), Midwest (n = 1010)
Recruited Age Range: 19-25
Wave 2 Education Distribution

- High School Diploma
- 2-Year Degree
- Some College
- Bachelors Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Other

Wave 2 Race/Ethnicity Distribution

- White
- African American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Arab-American
- Asian Indian
- Other
- Multiethnic

Wave 2 Immigrant Distribution

- US Born 84%
- Foreign Born 16%
Comparison between Wave 1 and Wave 2 Samples

For the full sample, Wave 2 has more people with degrees (both bachelor’s degrees and graduate degrees), which makes sense given that our sample is now a year older and many of those who had completed “some college” in Wave 1 (for Wave 1 information, see http://ase.tufts.edu/iaryd/documents/annualReport2011-2012.pdf) are likely to have graduated. The proportion of the sample born outside of the United States remained stable at 16% of the total sample, and the proportion of the sample that is male increased from 40% to 41%. There were some changes in the percentage of the sample from different ethnic backgrounds (most notably an increase in Asian participants from 16.4% of the total sample to 19% of the total sample), resulting in the percentage of the total sample identifying as White decreasing from 61% to 59%. The age distribution became more diverse in Wave 2, although there are fewer 19 year olds in Wave 2 than there were 18 year olds in Wave 1, suggesting that our retention and recruitment of younger participants may not have been as effective as our retention and recruitment of older participants. However, the cohorts with the largest representation in Wave 1 (ages 19 – 22) still had the largest representation in Wave 2 (now ages 20 – 23).

Wave 2 Longitudinal Sample

The longitudinal sample in Wave 2 (containing all participants in Wave 2 who also participated in Wave 1) generally reflected these overall patterns with some small differences. For educational distribution, the longitudinal sample had fewer participants with only high school diplomas or only some college, and more participants with Bachelor’s degrees. The longitudinal sample was also 61% White and 60% female, whereas the overall sample in Wave 2 was only 59% White and 59% female. However, the percentage of foreign-born students was similar, as was the proportion of participants from different age groups.

Final Thoughts on Wave 2 Demographic Findings

These demographic findings suggest that we have been generally successful both in retaining participants in similar proportions to the original sample, and in recruiting new participants who are demographically similar to the original group of participants recruited in
Wave 1. Of the approximately 4,000 participants in Wave 1, almost half continued to participate in Wave 2, and we were able to recruit over 3,800 participants (including both returning longitudinal participants and new participants for a matched sample) into the Wave 2 sample. We hope to continue, and improve upon, this success rate in Wave 3.

Articles Published during reporting period

Scholarly Articles


Other Articles


Conference Presentations and Papers Presented During Reporting Period


Roundtable Discussion: Entrepreneurship as a Pathway to Positive Youth Development


Other Publications or Presentations

Spring 2012


Epicenter Meeting: The Stanford team (Bill Damon, Anne Colby, and Heather Malin) attended a meeting held by the Stanford Epicenter, a new research and education center dedicated to creating and sharing entrepreneurship learning resources for engineering students. At this meeting, we presented on the YES Project to scholars from around the U.S. who are also conducting research related to entrepreneurship education.